

MARINE CORPS LANCE CORPORAL DYLAN R. MEROLA, 20,
OF RANCHO CUCAMONGA, CALIFORNIA

Lance Corporal Dylan R. Merola had only been in Afghanistan for a little over a week, his mother told CBS Los Angeles.

"He was supposed to come home in a couple of weeks," said a loved one.

The Los Osos High School graduate planned to go to college and study engineering. He was honored at his alma mater's first football game of the season.

"One of the best kids ever," his mother, Cheryl Merola, said. "Kind, loving . . . he would give anything for anybody."

MARINE CORPS LANCE CORPORAL KAREEM M. NIKOUI, 20,
OF NORCO, CALIFORNIA

Kareem M. Nikoui attended Norco High School in 2019 and served in JROTC, CBS Los Angeles reports.

"Just a good kid. Really had a strong energy about him and knew what he wanted to do," Norco High School principal Robert Ibbetson said. "It was neat to see that kind of direction and drive and goal-setting."

He is survived by his mother, father and siblings, the city of Norco confirmed Friday night.

RECOGNIZING THE 30TH ANNIVERSARY OF CASA OF COLLIN COUNTY

HON. VAN TAYLOR

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, September 10, 2021

Mr. TAYLOR. Madam Speaker, I rise today in recognition of Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) of Collin County's milestone 30th anniversary of service to the community and to the abused and neglected children of North Texas.

Since its establishment in 1991, CASA has served 100% of the abused and neglected children removed from their homes in Collin County. As the child's official voice in court, these guardian ad litem work tirelessly to champion the best interests of the children they serve so that they receive needed services while ensuring the child's case moves through the system as quickly as possible. The ultimate goal of CASA is for each child to be reunited with family if appropriate or to be placed in a safe, permanent, and loving home. It is a mission their trained advocates do not take lightly.

CASA's network of trained advocates are often recognized for providing consistent, strong, and clear voices for abused and neglected children as they navigate a complicated legal system. CASA often serves as the only stable, trusted adult in the lives of these children as they navigate the changing dynamics of the foster care system.

Since its inception, CASA has advocated for more than 12,000 children. Further, despite the challenges posed by the pandemic, the dedicated volunteer advocates, exceptional staff, outstanding leadership, and committed Board of Directors and Advisory Board once again rose to meet the needs of those they serve by adapting their processes to provide even greater support through new and innovative ways.

Now as we reflect upon the thirty years of selfless service performed by CASA of Collin County, I ask my colleagues to join me in

thanking the organization and their decades of fierce advocates for changing the lives of countless children in our community.

HONORING THE LIFE OF WILLIAM R. SANCHEZ

HON. JUDY CHU

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, September 10, 2021

Ms. CHU. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor the life of William R. Sanchez who passed away at the age of 103 on August 23, 2021. Mr. Sanchez was a longtime constituent of mine in Monterey Park, California, and an American patriot who bravely served our country during World War II.

Mr. Sanchez was born on July 18, 1918, in El Paso, Texas, and moved with his family to Los Angeles at the age of one. He graduated from Thomas Jefferson High School in 1938 and immediately joined the Civilian Conservation Corps, where he worked in Northern California managing forests and building roads. He received a boxing scholarship to UCLA, but instead decided to enlist in the U.S. Army in 1940. In search of adventure, Mr. Sanchez chose to serve at Fort Mills on Corregidor Island in the Philippines. He was assigned to Army Intelligence on the island and served on General Douglas MacArthur's staff. While working with Army Intelligence, he helped provide advance notice of the Japanese force on its way to attack Pearl Harbor.

In 1942, Sgt. Sanchez fought in the Battle of Corregidor and was taken as a prisoner of war after keeping the Japanese at bay for five months. Like thousands of other American prisoners of war, he experienced unimaginable atrocities on the Bataan Death March. He was then transferred on a Japanese "hell ship" and taken to Camp Omori near Tokyo, where he was constantly abused, beaten, and underfed. Sgt. Sanchez's mental fortitude helped him endure these brutal conditions for over three years until the end of the war.

After the war, he returned to the U.S. and attended Woodbury College where he earned his bachelor's degree. He then went on to earn a master's degree in International Trade and Finance from USC. He started his own company, Belenco, and became one of the biggest importers and suppliers of rolled steel products on the West Coast. Mr. Sanchez settled with his family in Monterey Park in 1958 and took an active role in the community. Over the years, he remained active in the veteran community, serving as the keynote speaker at many veterans forums, and offering advice and support to countless veterans and their families on their benefits and rights.

William Sanchez was truly a hero of our time. He leaves behind an enduring legacy of service and sacrifice to our nation, and that is why it is my distinct honor to commemorate his life.

HONORING THE LIFE OF L.D. "JACK" GRIFFIN

HON. BRIAN BABIN

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, September 10, 2021

Mr. BABIN. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor the life of L.D. "Jack" Griffin, who passed away on Saturday, July 24, 2021, at the age of 94.

On April 11, 1927, Jack was born in Monroe, Louisiana, to Sam and Alma Lee Mullican Griffin. He married Myra Collier, and they spent 68 years together. Jack and Myra were blessed with two children, Ky and Leeza.

Jack patriotically served our country in the United States Navy during World War II. He was a longtime resident of Tyler County and continued to faithfully serve his community as a member of the First Baptist Church of Woodville. Jack was also a part of the Magnolia Masonic Lodge No. 495 in Woodville. As a Mason, he attained the 32nd Degree, an honor bestowed for his outstanding service. He was also a member of the El Mina Shrine in Galveston, Texas.

Jack traveled the world as a pipeliner. His specialty was in water crossings. Jack skillfully engineered and constructed pipelines in Straits of Mackinac, the Puget Sound, the Straits of Gibraltar, and many places in between. Jack retired as Director of Field Services with Williams Companies based in Tulsa, Oklahoma.

Jack is remembered as one who loved his family and looked forward to being amused and entertained at their regular gatherings. In the words of Henry David Thoreau, he went confidently in the direction of his dreams, living a life more than he imagined. Even though he worked all over the world, he said of his beloved Woodville, "It may not have been where I intended to go, but I think I ended up where I needed to be."

Jack is survived by his wife, Myra Griffin of Woodville; son, Ky D. Griffin and wife Rhonda of Jasper; daughter, Leeza Blanchette and husband Jacques of Woodville; grandchildren, Blake Blanchette and wife Helen of Sinton, Megan Parmer and husband Randy of The Woodlands, Brent Blanchette of Woodville, Blaire Rogers and husband Dwight of North Palm Beach, Florida and Collier Griffin of Chicago, Illinois; great-grandchildren, Caroline, Libby, and Ellie Blanchette, Emerson Parmer, and Sutton, Quint, and Griffin Rogers; sisters-in-law, Carolyn Collier of Goldsboro, North Carolina and Judy Sheffield of Houston; nieces, Kim Nagypal and husband Bela of Woodville, Tammy Bohannon of Allen, and Cristi Connor and husband Paul of Houston. Jack was preceded in death by his parents, Sam and Alma Griffin, and his brother-in-law Malcolm Collier.

Madam Speaker, I honor my friend Jack Griffin as one of the last members of the Greatest Generation. His faithful service to our country and his community will not be forgotten, and my heartfelt prayers remain with his family and friends during this difficult time.